

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE 1999 ATLANTIC TUNAS PROGRAM

SUMMARY OF FISHERY INFORMATION AND REGULATIONS FOR ATLANTIC TUNA FISHERIES

MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Atlantic tunas are managed under the dual authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) and the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (ATCA). ATCA authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to implement the binding recommendations of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). The authority to manage the U.S. Atlantic tuna fisheries is delegated to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Highly Migratory Species Management Division. In April 1999, NMFS adopted the final Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish, and Sharks.

REGULATED SPECIES

Tunas subject to regulation are Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) (*Thunnus thynnus*), bigeye tuna (*Thunnus obesus*), yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*), albacore tuna (*Thunnus alalunga*), and skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*).

MANAGEMENT AREA

The regulatory area encompasses all waters of the Atlantic Ocean, including the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea.

REGULATORY CHANGES FOR 1999

Fishing Year for Atlantic Tunas: In order to facilitate timely implementation of ICCAT recommendations for the fishing year, NMFS has changed the fishing year to June 1 through May 1 of the following year. See individual category information sections for fishing seasons.

Recreational Yellowfin Tuna Retention Limit: NMFS has implemented, effective July 1, 1999, a recreational daily retention limit of 3 yellowfin tuna per person, regardless of trip length.

BFT Quotas by Category: Due to an ICCAT-recommended quota increase of 43 mt and an overharvest in 1998, 1378 mt are available in 1999. The Reserve, to be used for inseason adjustments and fishery-independent research, is set at 43 mt. NMFS also has established a reserve of school BFT.

	mt		mt		mt
General	654	Purse Seine	252	Longline	113
Harpoon	54	Angling	261	Trap	1

BFT General Category Effort Controls: 1999 restricted-fishing days for the General and Charter/Headboat categories and time-period subquotas are indicated in the General category information section.

Time/Area Closure: To reduce BFT discards, NMFS has implemented a closure of a 1x6 degree block (39 to 40° N, 68 to 74° W) off the mid-Atlantic states to pelagic longline gear during June.

Allowable Gear: NMFS has prohibited the use of driftnets for all regulated Atlantic tunas.

Limited Access for Longline category: NMFS has implemented a limited access program for the commercial Atlantic tuna longline fishery as part of the new limited access program for the commercial Atlantic shark and swordfish fisheries.

PERMIT PROGRAM

All owners/operators of vessels (commercial, charter/headboat, or recreational) harvesting regulated Atlantic tunas in the management area, and all fish dealers purchasing regulated Atlantic tunas from those vessels must obtain an Atlantic tunas permit.

Atlantic tunas permits are issued in seven categories: General, Charter/Headboat, Angling, Harpoon, Purse Seine, Longline, and Trap. Only one category may be assigned to a vessel. NMFS has extended the Charter/Headboat permit requirement to charter and headboat vessels used to fish for, take, retain, or possess any Atlantic highly migratory species (i.e., tunas, sharks, swordfish, or billfish); NMFS will announce the effective date and further details later this year.

Atlantic tunas may be sold only by fishermen permitted in commercial categories and only to permitted dealers. Atlantic tunas taken by persons aboard Angling category vessels may not be sold.

To apply for or renew an Atlantic tunas permit, dial 1-888-USA-TUNA (1-888-872-8862) or, via Internet, go to: www.usatuna.com. Customer Service for the Automated Permitting System can be reached at 1-800-663-3879.

Note: Permit applications and renewals must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the date of desired permit effectiveness.

LARGE PELAGIC SURVEY

NMFS collects data on fishing effort and catch for BFT and other pelagic fishes. Through weekly telephone interviews, NMFS obtains information about fishing activity directed at large pelagic fishes. Captains are selected randomly from the permit list and may be contacted more than once during the fishing season. However, the telephone survey has been shortened to include only questions about the number of fishing trips for the previous week. In addition, field surveys collect biological samples and catch data for estimating annual harvests of BFT and other large pelagic fishes.

Collection of information about recreational catch of Atlantic tunas is essential for stock assessments and reports to ICCAT. Cooperation with LPS dockside and telephone interviewers is required under the authority of ATCA. Note that the LPS will be used as independent validation of the direct telephone harvest reporting system for BFT, thus a small degree of duplication is unavoidable. Please address questions regarding LPS interviews to Tony Lowery at (228) 769-8964.

**For inseason changes, call the
Atlantic Tunas Information Line at
(888) USA-TUNA or (978) 281-9305;
or visit www.usatuna.com**

INDIVIDUAL CATEGORY INFORMATION

All fishing for any species must cease and the vessel must immediately return to port to off-load once a large medium or giant BFT is retained or possessed under regulations pertaining to the General, Charter/Headboat, and Angling category fisheries, as applicable. Only BFT > 73" may be sold (by a vessel with a commercial Atlantic tunas permit).

In the case of multi-day trips, the daily limit applies upon landing.

Directed fishing for BFT in the Gulf of Mexico is prohibited. Landing BFT > 73" is allowed in the Gulf of Mexico only under the Angling category trophy and Longline retention limits.

Authorized gear for Atlantic tunas: Rod and Reel (including downriggers), handline, harpoon, bandit gear, longlines, traps (pound nets and fish weirs), and purse seines. Gear type restrictions for BFT are specified below.

GENERAL CATEGORY

1999-2000 BFT Quota:	654 mt (including 10 mt reserved for the New York Bight fishery)*	
Gear Type:	Rod and Reel (including downriggers), handline, harpoon, bandit gear	
Status:	Commercial	
Description:	Vessel owners who harvest Atlantic tunas, including large medium and giant BFT, by handgear and plan to sell the tuna must obtain a permit in the General category. Vessels permitted in the General category are eligible to sell giant or large medium BFT. These BFT will be counted against the General category quota.	
Restricted-fishing days:	For 1999, the scheduled days on which persons aboard vessels permitted in the General category are prohibited from fishing (including tag and release fishing) for BFT are: July 7, 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, and 28; August 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 22, 23, 25, 29, and 30; September 1, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 15, 19, 20, 22, 26, 27, and 29; and October 1.	
Season:	Opens: June 1, 1999 Closes: May 31, 2000, or when time period quota met	
Retention Limits:	BFT Size Class Young School/ School/Large School/ Small Medium	Limit PROHIBITED
	Large Medium/Giant	1/vessel/day after 6/1, except for restricted-fishing days

*Coastwide General Category Subquotas:

	<u>Metric Tons</u>	<u>Percent</u>
June-August	387	60
September	193	30
October-December	64	10
Total	644	100

Note: If a time period subquota is filled before the end of the period for which it is allocated, NMFS will close the General category until the start of the next period. When the coastwide General category fishery has been closed in any subquota period, NMFS may make available up to 10 mt of the General category quota set aside for the New York Bight area, defined as: the waters south and west of a straight line originating at a point on the southern shore of Long Island at 72°27' W (Shinnecock Inlet) and running SSE 150° true, and north of 38°47' N (Delaware Bay).

HARPOON CATEGORY

1999-2000 BFT Quota:	54 mt	
Gear Type:	Harpoon	
Status:	Commercial	
Description:	Vessel owners who conduct a commercial harpoon fishery for Atlantic tunas, including large medium and giant BFT, must obtain a permit in the Harpoon category. Vessels permitted in the Harpoon category may not participate in the General category fishery.	
Season:	Opens: June 1, 1999 Closes: May 31, 2000, or when quota met	
Retention Limits:	BFT Size Class Young School/ School/Large School/ Small Medium	Limit PROHIBITED
	Large Medium	1/vessel/day
	Giant	No daily limit

ANGLING CATEGORY

1999-2000 BFT Quota:	261 mt*	
Gear Type:	Rod and Reel (including downriggers), handline (NO SALE OF FISH OF ANY SIZE)	
Status:	Recreational	
Description:	Private recreational vessel owners that harvest Atlantic tunas, including school, large school, and small medium BFT must obtain a permit in the Angling category. Young school BFT (< 27") may not be retained and must be released immediately. Permit holders in this category may retain only one large medium or giant "trophy" BFT per year. <i>All BFT must be reported within 24 hours of landing (see information in shaded box on back page).</i>	
Season:	Opens: June 1, 1999 Closes: May 31, 2000, or when quota met	
Retention Limits:	BFT Size Class Young School	Limit PROHIBITED
	School/Large School/ Small Medium	Changes Seasonally - Call Atlantic Tunas Information Line
	Large Medium/Giant	1/vessel/year
	Yellowfin Tuna (>27")	3/person/day (effective 7/1)

*BFT Angling Category Subquotas (mt):

	School	Large School/Small Medium	Trophy
North	43	83	2
South	38	73	4
reserve	18		
Total	99	156	6

North = north of 38°47' N. lat. (New Jersey and states north)
South = south of 38°47' N. lat. (Delaware and states south)

CHARTER/HEADBOAT CATEGORY

1999-2000 BFT Quota:	Vessels are eligible to participate in the General and the Angling category quotas	
Gear Type:	Rod and Reel (including downriggers), handline	
Status:	Commercial (sale of BFT allowed only when the General category is open)	
Description:	Any vessel that carries passengers for hire must obtain a permit in the Charter/Headboat category. Anglers aboard vessels permitted in this category may collectively fish under either the daily Angling or General category limit as applicable on that day. The size category of the first BFT retained or possessed will determine the fishing category of all persons aboard the vessel for that day, and the applicable catch limits. Anglers aboard Charter/Headboat vessels may fish only under the Angling category rules on restricted-fishing days (listed in General category section). <i>All recreationally caught BFT must be reported within 24 hours of landing (see back page).</i>	
Season:	Opens: June 1, 1999 Closes: May 31, 2000, or when quota(s) met (no sale of large medium or giant BFT January 1 through May 31, or if landed under the "trophy" allowance)	
Retention Limits :	BFT Size Class Young School	Limit PROHIBITED
	School, Large School, and Small Medium	Changes Seasonally - call Atlantic Tunas Information Line
	Large Medium or Giant	1 "trophy"/vessel/yr 1/vessel/day 6/1-12/31

LONGLINE CATEGORY

1999-2000 BFT Quota:	113 mt*	
Gear Type:	Longline	
Status:	Commercial - - - LIMITED ACCESS	
Description:	Owners of vessels conducting longline operations that may result in the incidental taking of large medium and giant BFT must obtain a Longline category permit.	
Season:	Opens: June 1, 1999 Closes: May 31, 2000, or when quota met	
Time/Area Closure:	June 1 through June 30: 39° to 40°N, 68 to 74°W	
Retention Limits :	BFT Size Class Young School, School, Large School, and Small Medium	Limit PROHIBITED
	Large Medium/Giant	See below

*BFT Longline Category Subquotas:

	mt	Allowable catch
North of 34°	24	2% by weight of all other fish legally landed and sold per trip
South of 34°	89	1 BFT/vessel/trip provided that 1500 lb. (January-April) or 3500 lb. (May-December) of fish other than BFT offloaded and sold

TRAP CATEGORY

1999-2000 BFT Quota:	1 mt	
Gear Type:	Pound net, fish weir	
Status:	Commercial	
Description:	Owners of vessels conducting trap operations that may result in the incidental taking of large medium and giant BFT must obtain a Trap category permit.	
Season:	Opens: June 1, 1999 Closes: May 31, 2000, or when quota met	
Retention Limits :	BFT Size Class Young School/ School/Large School/ Small Medium	Limit PROHIBITED
	Large Medium or Giant	1/vessel/year

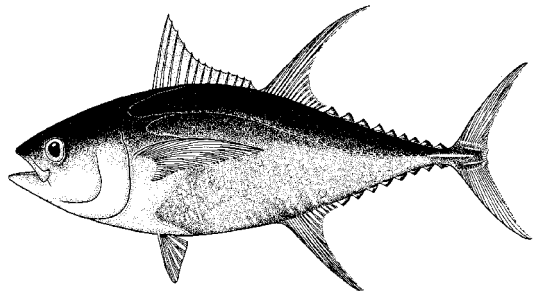
No Atlantic tunas other than BFT taken incidentally may be retained.

PURSE SEINE CATEGORY

1999-2000 BFT Quota:	252 mt	
Gear Type:	Purse Seine	
Status:	Commercial - - - LIMITED ACCESS	
Description:	Vessel owners who conduct a commercial purse seine fishery for Atlantic tunas, including BFT, must obtain a permit in the Purse Seine category.	
Season:	Opens: August 15, 1999 Closes: December 31, 1999 for BFT; May 31, 2000 for other tunas	
Retention Limits :	BFT Size Class Young School/ School/Large School/ Small Medium	Limit 1% per trip incidental take*
	Large Medium/Giant	50 mt/vessel/season, plus 1998 underharvest, as applicable

Large medium catch may not exceed 15% by weight of total amount of BFT per trip. Total annual amount of large medium BFT may not exceed 10% by weight of total amount of BFT per fishing year.

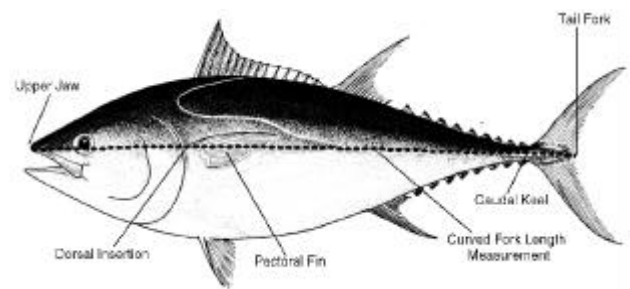
* no sale - counted against vessel allocation



LANDINGS INFORMATION

Curved Fork Length Measurement

For enforcement purposes, total curved fork length is the sole criterion for determining the size class of whole (with head) Atlantic tunas. Measurements must be taken in a line, tracing the contour of the body from the tip of the upper jaw to the fork of the tail, which abuts the dorsal insertion of the pectoral fin and the dorsal side of the caudal keel. For tunas with heads removed, pectoral fin curved fork length (PFCFL) must be taken and multiplied by a conversion factor of 1.35 to obtain total curved fork length. Measurements must be taken from the dorsal insertion of the pectoral fin, tracing the contour of the body, to the fork of the tail. **THE TAPE MUST TOUCH THE TOP PORTION OF THE PECTORAL FIN.**



Landing Form

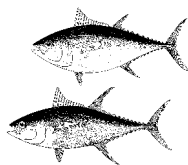
Bluefin, bigeye, and yellowfin tuna may be landed round with fins intact, or eviscerated with the head and fins removed, except that one pectoral fin and the tail must remain attached.

No person may retain or possess a BFT with the head removed that is less than 20 inches, PFCFL. No person may remove the head of a bigeye tuna or yellowfin tuna if the remaining portion would be less than 27 inches from the fork of the tail to the forward edge of the cut.

Landings of large medium and giant BFT must be reported. If sold, the landings must be reported by a licensed dealer on landing cards faxed to the NMFS Northeast Regional Office. BFT not sold by commercial permit holders must be reported to the nearest NMFS Enforcement office upon landing. Recreational landings of large medium and giant ("trophy") BFT must be reported as indicated in the Angling category information section.

Size Class Categories of Bluefin Tuna

SIZE CLASS	CURVED FORK LENGTH	PECTORAL FIN CURVED FORK LENGTH	APPROX. ROUND WEIGHT
Young school	<27 "	<20 "	<14 lbs
School	27 - <47 "	20 - <35 "	14 - <66 lbs
Large School	47 - <59 "	35 - <44 "	66 - <135 lbs
Small Medium	59 - <73 "	44 - <54 "	135 - <235 lbs
Large Medium	73 - <81 "	54 - <60 "	235 - <310 lbs
Giant	81 " or >	60 " or >	310 lbs or >



The minimum size for yellowfin and bigeye tuna is 27 inches curved fork length.

This pamphlet was prepared in June 1999. Since fishery rules are subject to change, fishermen must familiarize themselves with the latest regulations (via the Atlantic Tunas Information Line or www.usatuna.com). Fishermen are responsible for complying with current official regulations.

ADDRESS & TELEPHONE INFORMATION

NMFS maintains a 24-hour Information Line for news concerning Atlantic tunas. The Information Line, which is updated daily Monday through Friday, announces closure notices, inseason quota adjustments, and updates of commercial landings for BFT.

**Atlantic Tunas Information Line:
(888) USA-TUNA or (978) 281-9305**

Notices of closures, quota transfers, and retention limit adjustments are published in the Federal Register and announced to permit holders by other means, including NOAA Weather Radio.

For further information concerning the Atlantic tuna fisheries, contact:
National Marine Fisheries Service
Highly Migratory Species Management Division
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930
(978) 281-9260 phone (978) 281-9340 fax

Other important phone numbers:

Cooperative Tagging Program (800) 437-3936
(To obtain a tagging kit or report a tag recovery)

NMFS Enforcement Offices

Ellsworth, ME	(207) 664-0508	Charleston, SC	(803) 308-9861
Portland, ME	(207) 780-3241	Brunswick, GA	(912) 261-8242
Portsmouth, NH	(603) 436-3186	Titusville, FL	(407) 269-0004
Manchester, MA	(978) 526-4802	Miami, FL	(305) 652-2048
Gloucester, MA	(978) 281-9213	Marathon, FL	(305) 743-3110
Braintree, MA	(781) 843-9267	Sarasota, FL	(941) 359-3920
New Bedford, MA	(508) 992-7711	St. Petersburg, FL	(727) 570-5344
Shinnecock, NY	(516) 728-5162	Niceville, FL	(850) 729-8628
Brielle, NJ	(732) 528-3315	San Juan, PR	(787) 749-4405
Marmora, NJ	(609) 390-8303	Carriere, MS	(601) 798-9535
Salisbury, MD	(410) 543-8704	Dickinson, TX	(281) 337-1503
Newport News, VA	(757) 595-2692	Harlingen, TX	(956) 423-3450
Atlantic Beach, NC	(252) 808-2393		

24-Hour Enforcement Hotline

The NMFS Office of Enforcement maintains a 24-hour hotline for the public to report potential violations of Atlantic tunas regulations. This number should be used only to report potential violations, not for general information, concerning Atlantic tunas.

NMFS Enforcement Hotline (800) 853-1964
Coast Guard Hotline (800) SAVE-FISH

Coast Guard Regulations

Commercial vessels are subject to the Fishing Vessel Safety Act of 1988. For information, contact the Coast Guard office in your district:
Maine to New York (617) 223-8315
New Jersey to North Carolina (757) 398-6304
South Carolina to Florida (305) 536-5091
Gulf of Mexico (504) 589-4999

Angling and Charter/Headboat category vessel operators are required to report all recreationally caught BFT. Report your BFT landings as appropriate:

Area Landed	How to Report:
North Carolina/Maryland	Go to local reporting station
all other states	Call 1-888-USA-TUNA

For NC reporting station locations, call the NC Harvest Tagging Program at 1-800-338-7804. For MD reporting station locations, call the MD Department of Natural Resources at 410-213-1531. If reporting via the Automated Catch Reporting System (**1-888-USA-TUNA**), select the **catch reporting** option. If you've reported your landings at a NC or MD landings station, please do not call the Automated Catch Reporting System, as you are exempt from that requirement.